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ABSTRACT

There is a great difference among teachers with respect to their skills, what they like to do, what they do best, what they are trained to do, the levels at which they like to work, and their degree of commitment to the profession. They differ further in their interest in dealing with administrative problems, filling leadership roles, developing curriculum, and carrying out instructional research. These differences make worthwhile the investigation of alternate staffing concepts. Such an investigation should examine existing staffing programs in schools to determine the strengths and weaknesses of staffing theories, as well as their implementation in schools. It should examine the costs of such programs in relation to alternative staffing patterns and seek evidence of changes in pupil performance that have been associated with different staffing patterns. (Author/JF)

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INNOVATIONS IN SCHOOL STAFFING PATTERNS

WHAT SHOULD THEY ACCOMPLISH?

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WHAT SHOULD THEY ACCOMPLISH?

There is widespread discontent with current and commonly accepted methods of arranging school staffs to facilitate learning. This discontent finds its source in the practice of using the majority of teachers as if they were interchangeable parts, turned out on assembly lines of schools of education. In fact, there is a great difference among teachers with respect to their skills, what they like to do, what they do best, what they are trained to do, the levels at which they like to work, the degree of commitment which they can devote to the profession. They further differ as to their interest in dealing with administrative problems, filling leadership roles, developing curriculum and carrying out instructional research. These differences make worthwhile the investigation of alternate concepts of staffing.

The single salary schedule is perhaps the most tangible testimony to our lack of recognition of these differences among teachers, but there are numerous other school practices including the assignments traditionally given to beginning teachers, the high percentage of non-teaching duties performed by teachers and the high degree of teacher autonomy, that suggest almost a blindness in regard to what actually constitutes a teaching staff.

Unfortunately, the problems currently posed by variegated teaching staff will not be relieved by time; quite the contrary, they will become more critical. The demands upon education by a rapidly changing society and the entrance into the teaching profession of a new kind of teacher--better trained, more confident, and more critical--insures that the problems related to staff assignments and utilization will grow.

We would suggest an investigation of existing staffing programs in schools t determine the strength and weakness of staffing theories as well as their implementation in schools. We should also examine the costs of such programs in relation to alternative staffing patterns and to seek evidence of changes in pupil performance which have been associated with different staffing patterns. A secondary purpose will be the examination of the effects of staffing patterns on the teaching profession, including teacher attitudes, teacher performance, and teacher self-image.

This examination assumes that the role the staff plays in the performance of pupils is one of a number of powerful variables associated with pupil performance.

This study also assumes that there is great variation among the teaching staff. Some of the parameters of this variation would be: interest in teaching, in administrative duties, in leadership activities, in research activities, in curriculum evaluation, and in development and design of materials.

It is also assumed that the time commitment of any individual can and should be allowed to vary. This commitment might vary from the mother, who has perhaps only a few hours a day or a few days a week to contribute, to the head of the family who would desire to be a full-time professional with appropriate salary.

The study also assumes the increased sophistication involved in the teaching of certain subject areas and its potential effect on staffing patterns. For example, schools often cannot adjust economically to the employment of a highly expensive, highly specialized person on a full-time basis or do not have enough high-level work to keep such a person interested. The school might want a physicist or a physician to teach a course to a

number of pupils, or perhaps to all pupils for a relatively limited amount of time. Very few schools can justify full-time employment to the school board or to the employee, but a staffing pattern can be designed to use such people.

Another staffing problem which has for a long, long time cried for solution is what has been called the "cream separator phenomenon. This simply means that the brightest, most ambitious, and often best teachers tend to rise up and out of teaching (to speak of rising up and out of teaching is itself a sad commentary of the state of the profession). Career-minded teachers often feel that they have to leave teaching in order to advance. Creative people find that after a year or two of the classroom, expectations are such that there is little demand for creativity left. One simply goes through the same lecture notes, gives the same tests, conducts the same experiments, grades the same papers, and after a while even the pupils look the same. One escape route for teachers is to the colleges and universities, where it is thought that one can apply his creativity and initiative with much greater freedom. Another is to school administration. For some, it is simply to leave the profession.

As we look forward to solutions of staffing problems, and as we attempt to implement innovations in this area, we are not completely without experience; and as a result some directions are available.

One predictable dimension to future staffing patterns will be their dependence on para-professionals. There are differentiated functions and roles in education, and it is senseless to fill these roles with essentially one class of employees. Specifically, there are some things that only a classroom teacher can do well, but there are things that a person with substantially less training can do well. There are still other things that take

a good deal more training than that possessed by classroom teachers. Additional positions such as part-time tutors, aides, volunteers, community workers, will be appended to teaching on one hand while, on the other hand, there will be educational specialists and diagnosticians.

It can be expected that the role of the principal will undergo change. This change will take place regardless of staffing changes, but there are important implications for both the principal's role and the teacher's role in differentiated staffing.

There is perhaps in education today no position which is more uncomfortable and more questionable than that of school principal. Some of the titles suggest that the principal doesn't know where he is, certainly doesn't know where he is going; that he feels left out of any important decisions, has little authority and no power, and is paid a salary principally because somebody has to take the blame for all the things wrong in the school. Teacher militancy, the change in the kinds of people going into teaching, the growing strength of teacher organizations and the increasingly vocal demands of parents and student groups have threatened the position of the principal. In addition, as schools grow in size and knowledge grows in volume, and as people become more specialized professionally, the principal is obviously more and more unable to be everything to everyone.

It may be that the principal, of all professionals in the school, would benefit most from a differentiated staffing concept. He may find that there is a legitimate professional role at the top administrative level in the school, but that it does not include being educational leader, because in any subject area there are many in the schools who are much better qualified and prepared. And the same may be said for other areas such as discipline, schedule making, room assignment, and financial accounting. It may be

that the future role of the principal will be more social and political--to interpret the school to the community and the community to the school. There is a gap between management, pupils, parents, and the professionals. It may be that he can develop a position of legitimacy which says that he is the one person in the school who is trained and expected to mediate between the factions. It may be that his legitimate role is one of stimulation of creativity, improvement of human relations, and integration of educational outlooks into a cohesive program.

It is difficult to talk about staffing without introducing problems of funding. Few claim that the new staffing concepts will be less costly and this is expressly not one of the aims. On the other hand, one must realistically appraise the effects of rapidly rising teachers' salaries. In the days when teachers were commonly receiving subsistance salaries, there was little economic reason for a differentiation of functions. The school could hardly find a cheaper way to count milk money or keep attendance records. Recently, however, teachers' salaries have increased substantially, and this trend shows every sign of continuing. In a typical suburban high school with a pupil-teacher ratio of 18:1 and a mean teacher salary of $12,000 per year, it may well be that a significant re-alignment of roles and responsibilities could lead to more economic use of staff talents.

Perhaps the most hopeful facet of a new staffing pattern is the possibility that it can "turn on" the professionals. New patterns should put more reliance on and more responsibility for what goes on in education on teachers. They will begin to question the rationale which underlines current practices in their school and take a fresh look at the curriculum's effects on students and on society. If a school teaching staff really has the power to determine what goes on in school, it may decide that it cannot live with current practices and that the staff has to take the leadership to make improvements if improvements are to be made.